

Broomfield



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From Ashes to Glory, Part 6

Will Christ Find Such Faith?

In the Parable of the Importunate Widow¹ Christ describes a scene where a culturally insignificant individual sought justice from a crooked judge. Now eventually this judge gave the woman justice NOT because of the particulars of her case, she was clearly in the right or that “ACLU” put pressure on him. No! She received justice because she unrelentingly pursued it. At the close of the parable Christ asked the pregnant question, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find [such] faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Now, this calls into question the doctrine of perseverance and it is a good question. For, if redemptive history is any indicator, the trend in a Christian's life will be toward coldness, indifference, and lethargy. That is why the appeal is oft-times given in Scripture:

1 Timothy 6:12, “Fight the good fight of faith.”

1 Corinthians 9:24, “Run the race to win.”

2 Thessalonians 3:13, “[Do] not grow weary in doing well.”

These commands are given so that we might be ones who persevere to the end — who have such faith when the Son of Man returns!

Now, I want to continue discussing with you the elements of spiritual renewal. These are the elements which ought always to characterize our lives.

During the forty years prior to our text the people of God have been under the disciplining hand of the Lord.² And yet amazingly through it all, they did not yield or relinquish their futile claim on their own lives. But then seemingly out of nowhere God's people in our passage respond to the preaching of the word of God. They heard the message of Samuel that they should turn from their sin unto God. And after obeying this command, the Lord relented!

In light of this I ask these questions: What were the elements involved in Israel's transformation? What constituted their Spiritual Renewal?

Thus far we have seen that Spiritual Renewal is comprised of these parts:

¹ Compare Luke 18:1-8

² Compare Judges 13:1

- Brokenness, verse 2b, whereby God's people are brought to the end of themselves.
- Repentance, verses 3-4, whereby they turn from self-allegiance unto God.
- Devotion, verses 5-6, whereby they present themselves as a drink offering to the Lord, to be poured out at His whim.
- And submission, verse. 6b, whereby they place themselves under the obligations of God's word.

Trust

Now we are going to consider the crowning element of spiritual renewal: Trust.

1 Samuel 7:7, “**And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh**, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.”

I find this to be a rather shocking development and yet a typical one in the outworking of God's Kingdom.

What are God's people doing here? Are they just seeking to serve the Lord?

The ark now has been exiled for many years. God's people have lived as a dispossessed people during this time. A generation has arisen, that unlike their parents, who long to serve the Lord. They are sick of their sin, dishonor, and complacency. And so with lamentation and a deep sorrow they have assembled at Mizpah (a place associated with covenant fidelity³) essentially to renew their vows to the Lord.

And yet what happens?

Their spiritual renewal has apparently threatened the Philistines such that this evil nation is prompted to snuff out Israel's passion for renewal. Notice the shocking development.

1 Samuel 7:7, “And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, **the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel**. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.”

Recall that the Philistines were a confederation of five ruling kings. Each had his own city and consequent territory from which they ruled.⁴ That we read here of the “lords of the Philistines” tells us that the entirety of the Philistine army has arrayed themselves against God's people in order to crush their passion for God. And it almost worked.

! Samuel 7:7, “And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. **And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.**”

In other words, God's people quivered in their boots!

Brothers and sisters, I derive from this a principle which the rest of Scripture proclaims: The closer you

³ Compare Judges 20:1; 1 Samuel 7:16; 10:17

⁴ Compare 1 Samuel 5:6 The capital cities of the Philistines were Gath, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, and Gaza

are to God the greater will be the opposition.

Matthew 5:10, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Christ here indicates that if you endeavor to stand firm in the Lord, you will encounter persecution.

Psalms 149:4, “For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek [afflicted] with salvation.”

The promise held out to the child of God is NOT that life eventually will get easy if they will but trust the Lord BUT that after years of struggle and defeat, God will beautify them with salvation! Such is the lot of any who would seek to serve the Lord.

In fact it couldn’t be clearer.

2 Timothy 3:12, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

Acts 14:22, “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

In this world we are going to have tribulation.⁵ And the reason is that we are not of this world, but in fact are at odds with it! Don’t ever forget in warfare you get the most flack the closer you are to the target. And so it will be in our walks with God! That is why when in the providence of the Lord, God orchestrates events to bring you to the end of yourself. You finally turn unto the Lord with passion and vigor. Something crushing usually follows. Matthew Henry wrote this:

“When sinners begin to repent and reform, they must expect that Satan will muster all his force against them, and set his instruments on work to the utmost to oppose and discourage them.”⁶

And so we read here Israel finally is brought to the point of repentance and renewal.

And what happens?

The Philistines declare war!

Now was this because God was punishing His people?

NO! It was because Israel was flying close to the goal that God has for all His children, Christ-likeness⁷ and Satan and this world didn’t like it!

Now the temptation will be to question God at those times when our devotion is met with difficulty. We will say something like this:

“Lord for so many years I wasted my life pursuing this vain thing or that. Recently You brought

⁵ Compare John 16:33

⁶ Matthew Henry’s Commentary in one Volume, 1 Samuel, page 292

⁷ Compare Ephesians 4:13

me to my knees where I vowed to serve You. And this is how you pay me? A lost job? Sickness? Devastation? Truly if this is how you “repay” my love, I quit!”

I exhort you this day, “Don't you dare!” Take the trial, the suffering, the bitterness, and the woe. Bow before the Lord, and with Job let the world hear you say, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15).

The Commitment

Now thankfully in our text God's people didn't compromise like they had in years past. Rather, the persecution drove them to even a greater commitment.

1 Samuel 7:8, “And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.”

In light of their recent history, this was quite a new approach for the people of God: Trust!

Heretofore in the face of trial or difficulty, when Israel was taken over by fear, God's people had looked to their leaders,⁸ their religion,⁹ and to the hills.¹⁰ They had looked seemingly everywhere else BUT the Lord.

Issue of Blood

And yet here we read of a drastic change. In the midst of their fear and opposition, they turn to the Lord; they trust in the Lord! This is the fifth and final element of spiritual renewal. Now, I ask the question, “How is it that God's people here are quick to go to God and not to their broken cisterns (as they had done so many times in the past)?”

The people of God have changed! Far from being consumed by their arrogance, selfishness, pleasure, lusts, wants and needs in the providence of the Lord, the people have been broken such that that which now is important to them... is Christ! If you approach life with this sort of distrust in self and affection for the Lord, reliance upon Him will come rather naturally.

Think of the woman with the bloody issue.

Luke 8:43 “And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any.”

Now the Bible indicates that this woman had tried every doctor available. And when she “Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch’d” (Luke 8:44). In other words, this woman was desperate. She was at the end of her rope. And that is why she reached out to touch Christ’s robe.

⁸ Compare 1 Samuel 4:3

⁹ Compare 1 Samuel 4:5

¹⁰ Compare 1 Samuel 4:10; 6:21

Paul's Life

Think of Paul. He had spent a large portion of his life living in reliance upon himself, and from all appearances, he did quite well.¹¹ Yet regardless of his impressive show, inside he was fighting a losing battle.

Romans 7:9-11, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me."

Brothers and sisters, you don't live long here before either you suffer a mental breakdown or you turn to the Lord. Paul did the latter.

Romans 7:24-25a, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Object of Commitment

Do you see it?

Brokenness, repentance, devotion and the like all lead to an undying trust in the Lord! And it is this that constitutes the final element of spiritual renewal.

Now we love our superstars such that while I reference Paul and the woman with the bloody issue to encourage us, nevertheless I know that their examples will most likely have the opposite effect. No one here could muster such a glamorous turning unto the Lord as did this lady or Paul. And thus we easily in our pride and self-pity can find ourselves discouraged. We say things like "my conversion wasn't so dramatic" Or, "when I turned, I wasn't that broken."

Listen! It is not the quality or the quantity of the commitment. Nor is it the depth of emotion. What stands out when it comes to spiritual renewal is the OBJECT of our commitment; the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again 1 Samuel 7 portrays a genuine revival. This revival did not come because God's people wept, cried, or beat themselves. It came because for the first time in generations they looked to God alone for their protection.

1 Samuel 7:8, "And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines."

A simple, undistracted trust! That is what we must long for in our walks. That has always been the church's most effective weapon in her warfare!

Accordingly I say, you are in no better position in the world than when you are trusting in God. Viewed from this perspective, I know you will agree: Whatever it takes for us to bow the knee, it is good!

Psalms 119:71, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."

¹¹ Compare Philippians 3:4-6

2 Corinthians 12:10, “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

Renewal

Now with all five characteristics being evidenced by God's people, notice the renewal.

1 Samuel 7:9, “And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.”

This is quite a significant act on the part of Samuel. When this broken, repentant, devoted, submissive, and now trusting-in-the-Lord people approach him that he might approach God, the prophet knew exactly what to do. He brought them into the house of the Lord whereby they offered unto God a burnt offering.

Now this is very significant. In the Old Testament sacrificial system, although there were eleven sacrifices that could be offered¹² all were grouped under three types of offerings:

1. Expiatory Offerings.
2. Consecratory Offerings.
3. Communal Offerings.

Now the “burnt offering” mentioned here constituted the essence of the consecratory offerings.¹³ The meaning behind this sacrifice is derived from the fact that the entirety of the animal was offered unto the Lord. See, in the Expiatory and Communal Offerings, the worshiper or the priest took a portion for themselves. But this was not so with the Burnt Offering. Instead, the entire animal was given unto the Lord which was deigned to be a symbol of the intention of the worshiper!

And thus as we read in our text this climatic ceremony on the part of terrified sinners whereby in the context of worship they say to God: “Take me! Use me! I unreservedly dedicate myself to Thee!”

We understand that this represents a new day in Israel! God's people once again are relying upon God alone. God has become their all-in-all.

And as proof of this notice for the past forty years Israel has been under the disciplining hand of the Lord¹⁴ such that heretofore all “callings upon the Lord” fell on deaf ears. Yet here we read that God's people cried out to God, and HE ANSWERED (which means that the judgment of Judges 13 is complete).

Oh blessed peace and fellowship with God! Oh glorious renewal where God's intentions and our intentions are as one!

¹² There was the sin offering, the guilt offering, the burnt offering, the cereal offering, the drink/libation offering, the peace offering, the wave offering, the thank offering, the votive offering, the freewill offering, and the ordination offering.

¹³ According to divine prescription Samuel at this time would have brought a lamb to the altar, laid his hand on it as a representative of the nation, and then slew it on the north side of the altar, Leviticus 1:3-5, 11. He then would have collected the blood, presented it before the Lord, and sprinkled it around the altar, Leviticus 1:5, 11. Next he would have flayed and dissected the lamb. This would have included a ceremonial cleansing of the unclean parts and the arranging of the parts on the altar to be wholly consumed by God, Leviticus 1:6-9, 12, 13.

¹⁴ Compare Judges 13

Now if you and I were to encapsulate this spiritual renewal, we couldn't have done it better than did Samuel in this ceremony. Notice what the text says.

1 Samuel 7:9, “**And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD:** and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.”

Don't miss it! The typical animal used in a burnt offering was either a bull¹⁵, a sheep, a goat,¹⁶ or a bird.¹⁷ Accordingly the age of the sacrificial animal was not prescribed (except a minimal age of eight days¹⁸).

Yet here we read that Samuel took a “suckling lamb” as the offering, which means that he took a very, very young animal.¹⁹

Why did Samuel opt for such a young lamb?

He didn't have to. Keil and Delitzsche provide the answer when they wrote:

“Samuel selected a young lamb for the burnt-offering, not 'as being the purest and most innocent kind of sacrificial animal,'— for it cannot possibly be shown that very young animals were regarded as purer than those that were full grown,— but as being the most suitable to represent the nation that had wakened up to new life through its conversion to the Lord, and was, at it were, new-born.”²⁰

What is it that led to Renewal in the people's walk with God?

Being as a suckling lamb before the Lord! Indeed, look at the outline before you indicating “The Path” to Spiritual Renewal. Is not the picture of a wobbly, helpless, newborn lamb a beautiful representation of what we must ever and always be before God?

Oh let us be as a suckling lamb before God this day! Let us shakingly approach the Lord as a broken people! Let us turn from our pride and arrogance that always lifts us above Christ! Let us unreservedly and unconditionally dedicate ourselves to the Lord saying, “All that I am is Yours; use me as You will!” Let us submit ourselves to His will and providence! And let us ever and always rely upon Him for our daily and eternal needs!

And do you know what will happen?

We will know the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension!²¹

Now it should be obvious throughout this series that I haven't given you much of anything to do. And that is proper for spiritual renewal cannot be confined to a recipe because it is not what you do but what you

¹⁵ Compare Leviticus 1:3-5

¹⁶ Compare Leviticus 1:10

¹⁷ Compare Leviticus 1:14

¹⁸ Compare Leviticus 22:27

¹⁹ A typical suckling lamb is under four months old and may weigh up to 100 pounds.

²⁰ Commentary on the Old Testament, *The First Book of Samuel*, Volume 2, Page 74

²¹ Compare Philippians 4:7

are before God.

In light of this as I close, I quote to you the words of Korah in Psalm 46:10, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

These are needful words for our day. We struggle in our walks, and so in our own strength we labor and work for change. All that is needed is simply a humble reliance upon Christ.

May God grant us the grace to be as a suckling lamb before Him where we do not strive; but only rely! Where we do not do; but simply are as ones seated at the feet of the Lord!

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About the Preacher

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